

Key Insights Derived from the CenterAustria/University of Innsbruck Workshop

International Student Mobility in the Global Age – Best Practices in Europe and the United States, February 12, 2010

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This one-day workshop provided the audience with numerous important insights into study abroad programs/international student mobility from both an American and a European perspective in terms of trends and best practices.

American Experiences and Best Practices

- ✓ Michigan State University has achieved its position of leadership in international student mobility over the past fifty years as a result of visionary leadership in terms of making study abroad programming an integral part of the MSU educational experience. A visionary MSU President made the study abroad experience a high priority of an MSU education; over the course of time MSU led the early professionalization of study abroad programming by appointing a Dean of International Studies.
- ✓ While centralized leadership of study abroad programming is crucial, most initiatives come from the faculty in designing new short- and long-term programs. For MSU this mix of centralized and decentralized leadership has worked best.
- ✓ At MSU, faculty/the colleges usually drive the programming -- the administration of international studies is there to serve the faculty and its curricular needs.
- ✓ At MSU there are regular assessments of programs and curricular needs (“self-reporting”)
- ✓ Returning students are regularly surveyed about their learning and personal growth experiences after studying abroad
- ✓ The perception of a university’s excellent overseas program offerings can be used for student recruitment and student retention (MSU, St. Mary’s)
- ✓ Integration of overseas learning experiences in curriculum is crucial (MSU)
- ✓ Excellent overseas experiences can lead to higher levels of alumni/ae giving (St. Mary’s)
- ✓ Excellent overseas funding may lead to more outside funding

- ✓ Both at MSU and St. Mary's the locales of overseas program have trended from principally European to going global (MSU conducts overseas programs on all 7 continents)
- ✓ At MSU more and more programs are small and short-term to accommodate specific student needs and interests (next to traditional year- or semester-long overseas stays, an increasing number of MSU students are going on subject specialized in-between semester of summer school programs)
- ✓ MSU has even started an incoming freshmen summer school – freshmen study abroad for a summer prior to their freshman year at MSU
- ✓ MSU is exploring the feasibility of making a study abroad experience a REQUIREMENT for every MSU undergraduate (eg. from currently some 40 percent studying abroad to 100 percent participation)

Austrian Experiences and Best Practices:

- ✓ Internationalization came later in Austria (1990s) than in the United States and has benefitted from university reforms by the federal Ministry of Science giving Austrian universities more autonomy.
- ✓ Austrian universities and students participating in European Union programs such as *Erasmus* (Austria participated before joining the EU in 1995) has dramatically increased international student mobility in Austria (with over 2 million exchanges [162,000 annually], *Erasmus* is the largest exchange network in the world promoting international student mobility)
- ✓ As a result of the professionalization of international student mobility programs, Austrian universities have moved from traditional overseas programs in the U.S. (often launched by American Studies departments) towards global student mobility.
- ✓ Many of the recent partnerships and short-term program initiatives launched have occurred in Asia (Innsbruck) and Latin America (Graz), eg. the globalizing trend of international education initiatives – American exchanges are less popular (the Bush Presidency and American visa restrictions has done a lot of damage).
- ✓ The European Union and its promotion of international student exchanges has moved from intra-European to global too.
- ✓ Joint degree programs within Europe and by way of trans-Atlantic partnerships are a popular trend as well
- ✓ Both Innsbruck and Graz maintain some 500 partnership with universities worldwide
- ✓ Intercultural awareness is a high goal

- ✓ Austrian universities are struggling with a nativist national sentiment of “closing the doors” with a growing number of visa restrictions for foreign students from certain areas

UNO’s International Student Mobility

Outside Perspective

- ✓ From a close reading of Austrian – American student mobility, UNO’s long-term model relationship with Innsbruck in is startling (L. Johnson from Austrian Fulbright Commission)
- ✓ As a result of its partnership with Innsbruck, UNO has developed the entire spectrums of exchange programs (short-term visit, summer program, semester- and year-long programs and hybrids)
- ✓ Along with institutions such as Illinois and Harvard, UNO is among the top-five American institutions of higher learning bringing in Austrian students to the U.S. (in per capita student terms it brings the most Austrians to the U.S.)
- ✓ UNO is among the top-three in bringing Americans to Austria
- ✓ Foreign students coming to the U.S. to study is an “18 billion-dollar industry” (L. Johnson); the economic impact of foreign students on the New Orleans region is in the millions (quantified regularly by the Commerce Department).

Inside Perspective

- ✓ UNO’s Central/Latin American student programs (incoming) are thriving due to vigorous recruitment and a separate administrator that is taking care of student needs at UNO (M. Johnson)
- ✓ CenterAustria was created ten year ago to administer and grow the partnership agenda with the University of Innsbruck; the growing number of semester- and year-long incoming students from Innsbruck is a result of CA’s careful attention to student needs (G. Bischof).
- ✓ The Bachelor of International Studies (BAIS) has enjoyed remarkable success in a short period of time; BAIS students are urged to study abroad as a central part of the curriculum and are availing themselves of UNO’s study abroad opportunities (summer-, semester-, and yearlong programs); BAIS is also creative in offering students the opportunity to look for their own internship opportunities abroad to suit their needs (J. Hazlett).